

CHECKLIST MANIFESTO FOR THE REFERENCE DESK

WRITTEN BY BRIAN HERZOG AT SWISSARMYLIBRARIAN.NET
(ADAPTED FOR ASK-WA BY AHNIWA FERRARI)

ARE YOU SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION?

- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions and to restate the question in your own words to make sure you and the patron are on the same page.

IS THE PATRON LOOKING FOR A SPECIFIC ITEM?

- ✓ It's okay to use Amazon.com to verify the spelling of an author's name or title, and Novelist to check titles in a series. Many books and series also have Wikipedia entries. Once you know what you're looking for, be sure to check the local catalog, other libraries in the network, and also the statewide catalog to interlibrary loan the item if necessary. If it's nowhere to be found, consider if the item should be purchased.
- ✓ If the patron is comfortable with it, many books are now available online through Google Books, Project Gutenberg, and other sources. Some books are also available online in e-audio formats.

IS THE PATRON LOOKING FOR A SUBJECT?

- ✓ Use the catalog to find the right Dewey range so the patron can browse the shelf, and see where other libraries have cataloged their books on this subject.
- ✓ Remember to also check:
 - other collections (Reference, YA, J, Oversized, Large Print, etc);
 - research databases (especially for homework research or very current information);
 - the library's website (for subject guides, readers advisory, web links, etc);
 - general internet searching to find public websites (.edu and .gov sites especially);
- ✓ If you're in the right Dewey section but there are no books on the specific topic, look for a general book on the subject and check the book's index for your specific topic.

IS THE QUESTION ABOUT SOMETHING LOCAL?

- ✓ Check the local newspaper, local websites (especially newspaper and municipal websites, as well as meetup.com and yelp.com for socializing and events), printed brochures and fliers available in the library, event calendars, etc. Remember also to ask coworkers, as they may have heard of something or be involved with it.

IS YOUR ANSWER STILL "NO" OR "I DON'T KNOW" - WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- ✓ Is the problem that you're in the right place and the information is just not there, or that you can't think of where to look? Keep the patron informed, but don't waste their time - there is nothing wrong with referring them to a larger or specialized library, another Town office, or organization that is more likely to have the resources to answer their question. Be sure to give them contact phone numbers / email addresses / web addresses / driving directions / operating hours.
- ✓ Alternately, consider getting their phone or email address, and asking them if you can follow-up with them via those methods once you've had more time to look.
- ✓ Take advantage of local experts, and don't be afraid to ask a coworker or supervisor for help.

A STRATEGY TO MAKE REFERENCE TRANSACTIONS GO MORE SMOOTHLY:

- ✓ Sometimes it's hard to find the answer with the patron hovering above you watching and waiting. If possible, get the patron started on looking in one area, and then go back to the catalog/database on your own for more thorough research

TO MAKE FUTURE REFERENCE SESSIONS BETTER, A CHECKLIST FOR GENERAL PATRON INTERACTIONS:

- ✓ If you frequently get similar questions on the same topic, consider ways to make that information more readily available for future patrons. Online FAQs and knowledge bases help patrons before they even get to the desk.
- ✓ Pay attention to what kinds of questions make you uncomfortable, and then ask for training or explore those areas further. Ask your coworker or supervisor for tips on successfully working through those types of questions.
- ✓ Remember to show patrons how to do something, instead of just giving them answers. It's also okay to think out loud when working on a question - explaining why you're consulting the resources you are, or why books are in a certain spot in the library, helps the patron learn and may help you think of something you may have otherwise forgotten.
- ✓ Look around the Reference Desk - things within reach are probably there for a reason, but can also be the hardest to find if you don't know where they are.
- ✓ Remember to review applicable common tasks and policies, such as booking museum passes, helping with printing, and turning the appropriate technologies on and off.

CHECKLIST RESOURCES

ARE YOU SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION?

- ✓ QP 24/7 Policies – 4.2.1. Clarifying the Patron's Request - <http://wiki.questionpoint.org/247-Policies#42ReferenceInterview>

IS THE PATRON LOOKING FOR A SPECIFIC ITEM?

- ✓ Amazon.com – <http://www.amazon.com/> | Wikipedia – <http://www.wikipedia.org/>
- ✓ Novelist – a database paid for and available through most public libraries
- ✓ Wayfinder: The Catalog of Washington Libraries - <http://wayfinder.worldcat.org/>
- ✓ Google Books - <http://books.google.com/> | Open Library - <http://openlibrary.org/>
- ✓ Project Gutenberg - <http://www.gutenberg.org/> | Internet Archive - <http://www.archive.org/details/texts>
- ✓ Free e-books and e-audiobooks sites - <http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/audiobooks/public/free/>

IS THE PATRON LOOKING FOR A SUBJECT?

- ✓ Library of Congress Online Catalog - <http://catalog.loc.gov/>
- ✓ Search Google .gov and .edu sites by including "site:.gov" or "site:.edu" in your search terms.

IS THE QUESTION ABOUT SOMETHING LOCAL?

- ✓ Find newspapers in WA State - <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/usstate/uswashin.htm>
- ✓ Meetup.com - <http://www.meetup.com/> | Yelp.com - <http://www.yelp.com/> | Eventful - <http://eventful.com/>

MORE WASHINGTON STATE RESOURCES:

- ✓ Hard Times Resource Guide - <http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/hardtimes/default.aspx>
- ✓ Downloadable Audiobooks for WA State - <http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/audiobooks/>
- ✓ Ask-WA: Your Libraries are Online - <http://ask.wa.gov/>
- ✓ Wayfinder: WA Statewide Catalog - <http://wayfinder.worldcat.org/>